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*Greece Under Ioannidis:
Implications for US-Greek Relations*

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INTERAGENCY MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Greece Under Ioannidis: Implications for US-Greek Relations*

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SUBJECT: Greece Under Ioannidis: Implications for US-Greek Relations

MAJOR JUDGMENTS

The Ioannidis regime has not attracted support outside the military establishment and has not shown decisive or talented leadership. Nonetheless, it can withstand challenges from civilian politicians, youth, and labor as long as it retains the loyalty of the military.

Although Ioannidis has a far-flung network of informers and the support of strategically placed junior and middle-grade officers, his position is not secure. Even among his own backers there are alternative leaders, such as Armed Forces Chief Bonanos. Some followers of deposed President Papadopoulos remain; there is also a hard core of tough nationalists who would like Greece to adopt a more independent posture toward the US and NATO. And the silent majority of the armed forces would probably favor military disengagement from politics.

Yet all military factions are united in rejecting return to an entirely free political scene. And if the Ioannidis regime were ousted -- something that could happen soon, but might not come for a few years -- it would probably be replaced by another group of military officers.

Some factions might allow civilians more latitude than others would. Some senior officers might be inclined to turn to former Prime Minister Karamanlis, who would not return unless given a free hand -- something that would be difficult for the military to accord. Hard line younger officers would probably dispense with even a facade of civilian rule.

The Ioannidis regime is more adventurous than its predecessor in regard to Cyprus and Turkey, and is more narrowly nationalistic in dealing with the US. The mixture of these elements poses even more problems for the US than were raised by the Papadopoulos regime.

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While the present government views cooperation with the US as the base of its foreign policy, it will not shift domestic policies to repair what it considers unsatisfactory relations with Washington. Moreover, Athens, in its quest to extract more aid, is likely to become even stickier in dealings in regard to US facilities in Greece. It may seek to renegotiate the broad range of security arrangements to gain greater control of US military activities as well.

Continuing routine dealings by the US with the Greek Government alienates critics of the regime without fully satisfying Ioannidis. While civilian politicians would prefer the US to distance itself from the military rulers, a Karamanlis regime would not be likely to display dissatisfaction over past US policies by severing major ties with Washington. There is some risk that a more representative regime would feel under popular pressure to retaliate against the US, but any likely successor would be very reluctant to destroy this connection.

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I. PROSPECTS FOR THE REGIME

1. Since it took power in November 1973, the clique of military officers led by strongman Ioannidis and its puppet government in Greece have not managed to attract support outside of the military establishment. Those political forces that hoped that the ouster of Papadopoulos would speed the return to parliamentary government were rapidly disappointed. Military force remains the only important prop of the government. And sharply deteriorating economic conditions -- runaway inflation -- and the absence of decisive leadership are further eroding the position of the rulers. From the beginning they have been unable to attract qualified administrative talent, and there is increasing factionalism and politicization in the army.

Civilian Sentiment

2. Figures from the pre-Papadopoulos days have shown little disposition to risk the consequences of speaking out against the regime. Though disenchanted with the current government, they do not seem to have attempted to organize opposition to it. None of the prominent personalities of the old political scene is likely to emerge as a center of resistance to the present rulers. Ex-Prime Minister Constantine Karamanlis remains the choice of many within Greece as an alternative to the military regime, but perhaps because he feels the military rulers may turn to him for help, he has yet publicly to attack the regime from his self-imposed exile in Paris.

3. Youth and workers have the potential to challenge the regime -- but it's still only a potential. Their open agitation played a significant part in Papadopoulos' downfall. Yet thus far they have made only half-hearted efforts to challenge the new government and seem cowed by its no-nonsense approach to law and order. Government determination to act decisively against dissidence was illustrated by the recent arrest of some 45 members of the outlawed Communist party accused of publishing pamphlets urging youth to boycott classes.

4. For the students to rally significant overt support from labor and other elements of society would require either (a) signs of weakness or indecisiveness on the part of the government in acting against dissidence, or (b) an issue,

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such as overt army or police brutality, which would bring the people out in the street. Public outrage over such incidents during the riots last November has cooled somewhat, but could be rekindled by another violent confrontation. Also, economic distress is clearly working in the dissidents' favor as it did in November. And students and labor would enjoy popular sympathy, if not overt support, should they again openly defy the government.

5. No combination of civilian forces, however, could topple the regime without the support of important elements in the military. The growing number of civilian dissidents recognizes this fact. Yet action by students and workers could have reverberations within the military establishment. If the government failed to cope satisfactorily with this challenge, factions within the military could be provoked to move against Ioannidis.

Factionalism in the Military

6. The officer corps is not solidly united in its loyalty to Ioannidis. Through his control of the military police and security forces, Ioannidis has a far-flung network of informers which makes it hard to catch him unawares. He has thus far maintained himself behind the scenes, where he has the greater flexibility in dealing with opposition. Yet it is clear that Ioannidis' performance has not satisfied all segments of the officer corps. Already some officers are voicing their dissatisfaction to the tentative, ad hoc approach to policies that has characterized his puppet government.

7. Though the situation has not yet jelled and our evidence remains scanty, it is possible to identify various long-existing factional tendencies among the officers:

a. A group presently loyal to Ioannidis. These officers themselves are not completely unified in view and include other possible leaders, such as Armed Forces Chief Bonanos, who might eventually make their own bid for power. This group is united in distrust of democratic processes and is intensely and narrowly nationalistic. It wants the army to hold power indefinitely, because it fears that any form of democratic

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government would lead to political turmoil and eventual Communist takeover. It is the best organized of all military groups and is supported by the entire military police organization as well as some strategically placed junior and middle-grade officers in all the services. These officers are determined to purge pro-Papadopoulos elements from the army and punish those involved in corruption under the previous government. It was pressure from within this group that overcame Ioannidis' reluctance to move against officials involved in corruption under the Papadopoulos government. And similar pressure would tend to inhibit Ioannidis from giving in to popular demands to liberalize the regime.

b. Other proponents of continued military rule. While differing little with Ioannidis in their views of the proper military role, there are other more or less amorphous groupings which aspire to power. The purges undertaken by Ioannidis have not removed all the former supporters of Papadopoulos. It is hard to tell how many would fall in this category, but, though the most prominent and dangerous of these were removed in the November coup, Ioannidis still believes they pose a significant threat to his regime. Another fringe group of younger officers is commonly referred to as the "Qadhafiites." They are a hard core of tough nationalists who would like to see Greece adopt a more independent posture toward the US and NATO, particularly in negotiations for use of facilities. But most of them supported Ioannidis in November because they believed he would impose a more nationalistic regime.

c. Moderates, who comprise the silent majority of the officer corps. They are distressed by the politicization of the military establishment and favor the armed forces' disengagement from politics. At the same time, they fear that return to an entirely free political scene would lead to political anarchy. They would thus support a restricted form of political freedom to prevent the type of political free-for-all which preceded the army takeover in 1967. Many of the professional younger officers sympathize with these views and would prefer to stick to military duties without becoming involved

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in political activity. A number of senior officers are also in this category. This group is directly influenced by family and friends outside the military who are disenchanted with the regime.

8. Ioannidis has launched a program ranging from purges to pep rallies to counter dissidence within the army. He has taken care to place his own supporters in key military posts. Continuing purges of the military establishment are dangerous, however, and even newly rewarded generals may switch sides if they feel threatened.

What Kind of Successors?

9. For the present, Ioannidis and his supporters hold sway. But theirs is an uneasy rule. As grievances accumulate, the government will become increasingly vulnerable to another military coup by those who are either impatient with the regime's lack of progress or fearful that they will be purged because of real or imagined anti-government plotting on their part.

10. It is not yet possible to set a timetable for this development nor to specify what group of officers would emerge in control. Some US observers believe that the regime's lack of talent, public hostility, and military factionalism will lead to Ioannidis' downfall rather soon; they would be surprised if he lasted much more than a year. Others, stressing his ability to cow opposition, give him a fair chance to survive somewhat longer. But most agree that the present regime is unlikely to remain as long as the six-year term that Papadopoulos enjoyed. And when it goes, it is most likely to be replaced by a new clique of military conspirators, similarly adept at plotting but unskilled in administration. There could even be a succession of military coups.

11. Yet while any military successors would probably be unwilling to allow civilian politicians to run the whole show, some military factions might allow civilians more latitude than others would. For example, the senior officers from the "silent majority" might be inclined to delegate greater responsibility to civilian government. To form such a government they might seek younger civilians not tainted by involvement in the older political scene, or turn to former Prime

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Minister Karamanlis. But Karamanlis would not return without guarantees of a free hand in governing -- something that would be difficult for the military to accord him. Even the moderate officers would no doubt be prepared to intervene if the civilians threatened the military's autonomy or appeared to be failing to provide stable and effective government. The hard line younger military, on the other hand, would probably dispense with even a facade of civilian rule and would talk more of a lengthy process of basic social reform as necessary before permitting any movement toward return of parliamentary government.

II. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE US

12. The Ioannidis regime has yet to develop its own distinctive and well-articulated foreign policy: it is continuing along the general lines followed by Papadopoulos. The officers who control the government are strongly committed to the West and are intensely anti-Communist in outlook. At the same time, they are even more nationalistic and parochial in their views than their predecessors. They are more adventurous than Papadopoulos in their approach to the Cyprus problem and worried about a military confrontation with Turkey. The mixture of these elements poses even more problems for the US than were raised by the Papadopoulos regime.

Cyprus and Turkey

13. Like many Greek officers who have served on Cyprus, Ioannidis has a special interest in the island's fate. But his interest is combined with deep distrust of Makarios and an exaggerated view of the Communist threat on Cyprus. The danger that Greece will increase its activity in Cyprus is probably not imminent because Ioannidis seems now to be devoting his primary energy to consolidating his position internally in the Greek army. If he succeeds in this effort, however, he might at some stage try to unseat Makarios. Such a move would introduce great strains into Greek relations with Turkey and would face the United States with the difficult task of dampening conflict between NATO allies.

14. At least as ominous for the US is Ioannidis' approach to relations with Turkey. The Greeks and Turks have long had differences about the territorial waters of the

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Aegean. The recent discovery of oil in an undisputedly Greek area off the island of Thassos, indicating that the Aegean may overlay rich deposits, has made this dispute more potentially explosive. The Greeks and Turks are in dispute over claims to the right to drill elsewhere in offshore areas in the Aegean. Thus far the Ioannidis regime has been unwilling to negotiate with the Turks over this thorny issue on the grounds that even to agree to talks would compromise the Greek position on the disputed area. Ioannidis' inflexibility on this point may stem partially also from a calculation that confrontation with Turkey would help solidify his internal military support as well as distract popular discontent with his government. The Greek military has begun to take certain precautionary measures for possible conflict with Turkey. While the Turkish government has sought to dampen tensions, already a cycle of action and reaction seems underway which eventually could embroil Greece and Turkey in confrontation.

Relations with the US

15. Like its predecessor, the Ioannidis regime views co-operative relations with the US as the base of its foreign policy. Moreover, the reservoir of pro-US sentiment among the ruling military circles appears stronger and more pervasive than any minority tendency that would wish to loosen these ties. At the same time, the government is unwilling to shift domestic policies to repair what it considers the unsatisfactory present state of relations with the US. While the Greek rulers would like US endorsement of their regime and open-handed assistance, they do not expect Washington to be that forthcoming. What they fear particularly is difficulty in acquiring the weapons they believe they need to modernize their armed forces to cope with "local war situations." And they are sensitive to overt signs of US displeasure with their regime. They will especially watch to see how the US treats them now that both sides have had some months to assess the November coup.

16. In this context, the new rulers are currently reviewing the conditions under which military facilities are made available to the US. They regard US facilities in Greece to be worth more in terms of aid than the US is presently providing under Foreign Military Sales, and they are more avid than their predecessors in desiring the US to up the ante. For example, they are raising difficulties and causing delays in present negotiations over the use of facilities at Souda Bay. Thus far, they

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are still feeling their way along, and are unsure how much the traffic will bear. The Greeks are considering turning to other Western arms suppliers if the US will not allow them to purchase the quantities they believe they require.

17. There has also been a growing ambivalence toward the US among the Greek civilian body politic. On the one hand, underlying pro-US sentiment still remains strong among the public as well as one can judge. The emotional and family ties binding Greeks in general to the US are too profound to be sundered by surface disagreements. On the other hand, because the US is widely regarded as the moving force behind this -- and any other -- regime in Greece, there is a well of popular suspicion of US motives that can be exploited to promote anti-Americanism if the opportunity arises. And popular resentment of the US seems sure to grow. This could impel the regime to become even stickier in its dealings with the US.

18. Dealing at a routine level with the Greek regime and avoiding identification with it as far as possible can create a growing irritation in relations. But it does not threaten an abrupt crisis. Pained as the present rulers may be with the lack of US enthusiasm for their regime, they seem ready to accept this posture with resignation. They recognize that the US urged Papadopoulos to restore parliamentary rule and they would impute no special motives to continuation of this pressure on them as well. Yet they will remain resistant to liberalizing the political system to satisfy their foreign allies.

19. Even with deferral of the second phase of the home-porting agreement, Ioannidis and his colleagues may seek to renegotiate the broad range of mutual security arrangements between the two countries. The Greek military, which would dictate the Greek stance on these matters, views American facilities as hostage to extract concessions on the acquisition of American military equipment. Though the Greeks will base their appeal for weapons on NATO force requirements, the underlying aim would be to acquire the capability to handle potential hostilities with Turkey and Bulgaria and also to meet the expectations of the Greek officer corps. Ioannidis probably sees his ability to secure weapons from the US or elsewhere as critical to his own survival.

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20. In addition to assurance that the US would supply modern weapons in some quantities, the Greeks will press for changes to give them greater control of US military activities and to limit the privileges and immunities of American personnel in Greece. We regard this as essentially a bargaining ploy, but it may nonetheless lead to significant alteration of the US position in Greece. During the October war, the Papadopoulos regime, while adopting a policy publicly at variance with that of the US, was nonetheless covertly helpful in various ways. For example, it provided useful data on Soviet resupply flights and allowed more extensive use of US facilities in Greece than is provided by bilateral agreements. In the future, we could not expect this type of cooperation from the Ioannidis regime, unless the US were prepared to be more forthcoming in a variety of military matters.

21. US willingness to continue to deal with the military rulers would not be popular with civilian politicians within Greece. In the unlikely event that Andreas Papandreou (or some one of his political stripe) were to return to head a new Greek regime, he probably would use alleged US support for the Ioannidis government as a pretext for action against the US. It seems unlikely, however, that popular resentment against the US would impel Karamanlis, if he should be recalled by a military regime, for example, to sever major ties with Washington. There is some risk that a more representative regime would feel under popular pressure to retaliate against the US for its alleged identification with military dictatorship, but the US and NATO's role in Greece's security system is substantial; a likely successor regime would be very reluctant to destroy this connection.

22. Efforts by the US to distance itself from the present rulers would complicate bilateral working arrangements. Given the sensitivity of the Ioannidis regime, it would probably react by pressing the US on the use of facilities. How far the government would go in restricting US activities in Greece would depend on how much open displeasure the US expressed. Merely urging the Greeks to permit an early return to parliamentary procedures would not appear to the Athens regime nor to its opposition to be much of a change in the policy the US pursued toward Papadopoulos. Public characterization of the present regime as repressive -- thus encouraging additional opprobrium from other NATO allies -- would be seen by Ioannidis as unnecessarily irritating and would provoke him to retaliate, without, however, convincing most critics of the regime that the US had abandoned Ioannidis. It is likely that under these circumstances the Greek attitude toward military relations with the US would become much less cooperative across a broad range of issues.

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